



# News Release

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Contacts: [Lonnie Malone](#), Immunization Program CHILd Profile  
[Gordon MacCracken](#), Communications Office

360-236-3529

360-236-4072

## **Don't let the flu spoil your holiday plans** *Get a flu shot as part of your seasonal preparations*

**OLYMPIA** — Flu can make even healthy adults and children very ill, and the holidays are no time to be sick. That's why now is a great time to get a flu shot.

Flu activity is low and vaccine is here. It's a good idea to get vaccinated before things get busy with travel, family gatherings and holiday events. Getting a flu shot now will protect you throughout the season and keep the flu from spoiling holiday plans with loved ones.

It takes up to two weeks for the vaccine to become effective, so be sure to schedule an appointment at least a couple of weeks before travel.

"Flu is a serious disease that causes thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations each year in our country," said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. "This year's vaccine is a good match with the strains that are circulating. Flu vaccine not only reduces your risk of illness, it prevents you from spreading the virus to others."

This year it's recommended that everyone aged 6 months and older get vaccinated. Vaccine is especially important for babies, young kids, pregnant women, people over 50, and those with certain medical conditions like asthma, diabetes, and heart disease. It's also important to remember to wash your hands, cover your cough, and stay home when you're sick.

The flu vaccine protects against the three most widely circulating strains of influenza virus, including H1N1. It comes in two forms: a shot for everyone 6 months and older, and a nasal spray for healthy people 2 to 49 who aren't pregnant.

For the first time, a high-dose flu shot is available to help adults age 65 and older boost immune response. This vaccine isn't preferred over the regular flu shot – older adults should ask their health care provider which is right for them.

Kids under 9 may need two doses, each administered a month apart to be fully protected. Ask your doctor, nurse, or clinic about how many doses your child needs. The state purchases flu vaccine for all kids aged 6 months through 18 years and distributes it at no cost to health care providers across the state. Some providers may charge an administration or office visit fee.

To find an immunization clinic, contact your health care provider, use the Washington State Department of Health's [Flu News website](http://www.doh.wa.gov/FluNews/default.htm) (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/FluNews/default.htm>), or call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588.

To keep up on the latest health information and tips, follow the [Department of Health on Twitter](http://twitter.com/WA_DeptofHealth) ([http://twitter.com/WA\\_DeptofHealth](http://twitter.com/WA_DeptofHealth)).

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